

Focus condemns city health benefits plan



TOM MINNERY: Focus vice president called the proposal "a sham."

By ED SEALOVER
THE GAZETTE

After months of silence, Focus on the Family has denounced a proposal to give non-immediate family members city health benefits, dealing it a potentially fatal blow.

The area's most influential conservative religious group sent a four-page letter to council members Thursday outlining its opposition to the plan.

Supporters and opponents of

the proposal said Friday this could carry a lot of weight with council members and residents.

After cutting benefits that had been offered to same-sex partners of city workers in April, several council members brought back a proposal in the fall.

It would extend benefits to anyone living with a city worker, including same-sex partners, unmarried heterosexual partners, adult

Proposal to cover workers' housemates favors gays, it says

NO THANKS: Focus wary of receiving government money.

Page 3

children and parents younger than 65. Workers would be required to pay 100 percent of insurance premiums but would be getting a better rate because it's a group plan.

After the council deadlocked on the proposal 4-4 in December, with

Councilman Randy Purvis absent, another vote was postponed until February so supporters could explain it more to the community.

In the letter, Focus Director of Issue Response Peter Brandt wrote that after examining the proposal, the organization concluded it is skewed toward homosexuals.

If the proposal is intended to help extended families, it wouldn't have excluded parents older than

65 and adult children trying to move out on their own, Focus Vice President Tom Minnery said Friday.

"This is a sham," Minnery said. Councilman Jerry Heimlicher, one of the main supporters of the plan, immediately decried Focus' response as being "full of half-truths and misrepresentations." For example, parents older than 65 already are covered by Medicare, he said.

FOCUS: Plan could be dropped

FROM PAGE 1

Councilwoman Margaret Radford, who opposes the proposal, said the letter backs her assertion that the community is not ready for this kind of change.

Heimlicher and Radford agreed, however, that the group's involvement in the issue will make it tougher to pass the benefits extension.

"Focus on the Family has the ear of a lot of people in the community, and if Focus is coming out and saying they're opposed to it, I take that to mean there are a lot of people in the commu-

nity who are opposed to it," Radford said.

Purvis said Friday he has not seen the letter but is leaning toward opposing the plan because there should be a limit on the city's obligations to its employees.

Heimlicher added that if he is sure the plan does not have enough support to pass in a couple of weeks, he will ask to take it off the agenda and kill it without debate.

"There's no reason to put the community through it again," he said.

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AFA graduate gets prison for child porn

THE GAZETTE

A 1984 Air Force Academy graduate has been sentenced to 22 years in federal prison for child pornography and other charges.

Jeffrey Gordon Speelman, who left the Air Force in 1988, was described as a "predator of young children" by U.S. District Judge Richard Cebull, The Billings (Mont.) Gazette reported Friday.

The judge said the pre-sen-

tence report contained "page after page that describes things I've never read in my entire tenure on the bench," the newspaper reported.

Speelman admitted he received child pornography on his home computer and collected it on disks from October 1998 to May 2002. He pleaded guilty to engaging in sexual acts with a child younger than 12 from 1991 to 1994 and to having sexual contact with a child between 2001 and 2002.

The Billings newspaper reported Speelman had taught at Montana schools in Busby, Bel-fry, Jordan and Lame Deer.

The reason for Speelman's discharge from the Academy after four years was not available. Academy spokesman Johnny Whitaker said graduates normally serve at least five years, although some are discharged early for medical reasons or during times when the service is reducing personnel.

DEATHS

DONALD R. BOWER

Born May 26, 1967. Died Jan. 23, 2004.

Manufacturer, 31-year Colorado Springs resident. Survived by his parents, Tom and Sandra George; three brothers; and six sisters. Memorial services, 10 a.m.

vices, 10 a.m. Tuesday, Memorial Gardens Chapel. Entombment, Memorial Gardens Abbey of the Angels Mausoleum.

THOMAS YIUM

Born June 19, 1933. Died Jan. 22, 2004.

SERVICES

Ruth Marie Anderson

Memorial services, 2:30 p.m. Sunday, Medallion East Care Center, 1719 E. Bijou St. Inurnment, St. John's Cathedral, Denver. Swan Law Funeral Directors.

Union Blvd.

Betty Woods Loewen

Visitation, 9 to 10 a.m. today, with services to follow, Adamson Memorial West Chapel, 2000 47th Ave. Greeley. Burial

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